

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, December 16, 2015, to discuss Council Goals/Priorities for the Next Two Years.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:03 p.m. The meeting was held in Room 201 of the Greenbelt Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Jim Giese, Greenbelt News Review; Molly Lester and others.

Mayor Jordan said Council will be discussing comments they heard while out campaigning this year and then discussing goals and priorities.

Mayor Jordan said many residents in Greenbelt East were not aware of how fast things were developing at Greenbelt Station and some residents had questions about animal shelter operations and Franklin Park. He added that some residents suggested council members should be elected by districts (wards) and the City election should be held in the same years as the general election.

Ms. Mach said one complaint she heard from residents was about traffic problems – busses going too fast and drivers not stopping for stop signs (Ridge and Westway was the biggest problem). She said one family was very concerned that the basketball courts on Mandan Road were still not available for use and felt that it took away an option for positive activity for young people. Ms. Mach also said residents expressed the need for educational programs within the forest preserve.

Ms. Pope said she generally heard a lot of good comments from residents. She said some concerns she heard from residents included speeding busses and drivers failing to stop for stop signs, the future of Greenway Center with the loss of Old Navy, lack of activities for young children on the weekends that working parents could participate in, need for updates to both the indoor and outdoor pools, lack of communications throughout the City and the lack of signage for Roosevelt Center.

Ms. Davis said some residents expressed concerns about apathy amongst the residents, cliques such as Greenbelt East versus Greenbelt West and forest preserve issues, too much development, not enough development, traffic concerns and, in Greenbelt East, crime increases. She said some residents also expressed the need for younger leadership in all facets of government.

Mr. Herling said residents overall indicated to him that they were pleased with City services. He said some residents did express concerns about traffic, the need for another restaurant in Roosevelt Center and another dog park.

Mr. Roberts said residents expressed concern to him about taxes and whether they will be able to continue to live in Greenbelt Homes, Inc. (GHI) with the increase in GHI fees also. He said other concerns he heard were about crime in Greenbelt East (residents want to see a police officer on bike or foot, not just driving through neighborhood) and dissatisfaction with Franklin

Park Management. Mr. Roberts added that residents want the basketball hoop in Greenbelt East replaced.

Mr. Putens said many senior residents expressed concern about their ability to remain in their GHI homes and mentioned that the City should be proactive in its outreach for development of the nursing home site as a facility for seniors. He added that residents also expressed the need for a performing arts center and more police presence in Greenbelt East.

Mayor Jordan and Mr. Putens commented on the needs for a visioning/goals planning session and suggested council hold this session on a weekend. After discussion, it was noted that a variety of items need to be considered during this session including the economic development study, organizational study, infrastructure needs, etc.

Mayor Jordan requested that each member take the time to review council goals and prioritize them and provide to staff.

Mr. Roberts said there are many things that can be done that won't cost money. He said residents expressed concern to him about the military style training our police officers receive. Mr. Roberts said every hour a police officer spends training at the gun range should require an hour in training in how to work with people with mental disabilities or how to subdue individuals without force. He said residents believe our police officers are better than other police officers but feel there is room for improvement. Mr. Roberts added that residents want the City to purchase the scrap yard property and to reinstall the basketball hoop in Greenbelt East and have police officers patrolling the area on a regular basis.

Mayor Jordan then reviewed several of his goals for the next term including community economic development activities, managing change and organizational issues, fiscal restraint, etc. He also said he hoped to be able to have the police body camera program implemented this year and construction of a second dog park.

Ms. Pope said she agreed with Mayor Jordan's goals but noted there are a large number of goals on everyone's lists and noted the challenge with condensing all the goals proposed and determining what can actually be done. She noted the small size of staff and said more staff will be needed in the next few years in order to move forward and accomplish some goals.

Mr. Putens said all members have many goals, some of which should be short-listed and others that should be long-listed. He said Council needs to agree on what they want to do and prioritize, then determine how these goals fit into the organization and develop a plan to implement or phase the goals into a work plan.

Ms. Pope and Mr. Putens commented that if the FBI does relocate to the City, it will be a tremendous drain on staff and Council needs to be prepared.

Ms. Mach mentioned several of her goals including focus on the organizational study and the pedestrian and bicycle master plan, etc. but said her top priority was to get all Greenbelt children attending Greenbelt schools.

Ms. Davis reviewed some of her goals including continued great community solidarity, sensible development around the new FBI headquarters including apartments and condominiums for

seniors, maintaining a healthy forest preserve, addressing several traffic issues (Baltimore-Washington Parkway ramps and confusing lane markings at Kenilworth Avenue and Greenbelt Road), replacement of Dog Park mulch with gravel, bringing back basketball hoops to Mandan Road court, etc. She noted that continued professional management of the City government and budget is the main job of Council and staff.

Mr. Herling reviewed some of his goals including building a more inclusive community, economic development, budget process, transportation (circulator bus), amenities in recreation, environmental matters and construction of a new fire station.

After further discussion, Mayor Jordan said many good ideas had been suggested – some short-term, some medium-term and some long-term. He suggested that a work session to review the entire list of Council goals be scheduled, perhaps a day-long event.

It was requested that members provide their lists to the City Clerk who will distribute to all members in advance of the work session.

Post-Election Discussion

Council discussed the 2015 City election and indicated they were very pleased with the way the election was conducted. They requested the Board of Elections: 1) consider options to increase the voter turnout; 2) relocate Precinct 18 (Turning Point Academy) to a more convenient and well-marked location; and 3) consider whether pictures and biographies should be placed on the walls at election precincts.

The meeting ended at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*